

Elias Wencesia Lucero (1926 – 1950)

“Wesley” Lucero was born on 12 May 1926 in Otay, San Diego County, California. His hometown was listed as San Diego, CA. He attended Chula Vista Junior High School, and lived at 753 Twenty-Fourth Street in National City. After school, he joined the Army during WWII. Later during the Korean War, he served as a Medical Aidman (Medic) for the 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. His service number was RA39732986 and his MOS was 04812. He was a PFC (E3) in the United States Army in South Korea when he was listed initially as Missing in Action (MIA), then reclassified as Killed in Action (KIA). A brief history of the 24th Infantry Division for July 1950 follows:

The transition from Garrison to Combat duty was not easy. Some elements of the 24th Division found themselves in combat just days after being alerted. On July 1, 1950 the Division was placed on alert. On July 2, the 34th Infantry boarded ships and sailed for Pusan arriving that same evening. The Regiment spent 2 days preparing their equipment and on July 4th Boarded trains heading North. The 34th Infantry passed through Taejon and established blocking positions south of the 21st Infantry.

On July 5th, North Korean tanks approached the positions of the 1/21 at Osan. The defenders opened fire with artillery and bazookas, destroying 4 tanks but failing to stop the advance. North Korean infantry followed the tanks and almost succeeded in surrounding the Battalion of defenders. By early afternoon, the 1/21 pulled back, taking out as many wounded as they could and withdrew to the next blocking position at Ansong.

The battle at Osan was typical of those fought by the 1/21 during the first weeks of the war. The men of the 24th Division would dig in and fight the North Koreans, inflicting damage and casualties and then would fall back through the lines of the next defensive line and would dig in. This leapfrogging slowed the North Korean advance and gave precious time to the United Nations forces arriving daily at Pusan. Were it not for the bravery and tenacity of the 24th Division, the North Korean army might have met little resistance and possibly could have captured all of Korea.

Private First Class Lucero was a member of the 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was Killed in Action (KIA) while fighting the enemy near Taejon, South Korea on July 20, 1950. PFC Lucero was awarded the Purple Heart. He is buried at the Holy Cross Cemetery in San Diego, CA.

He is survived by his mother, Mrs. Rita Lucero, three sisters, Beatrice, Della and Henrietta Lucero, and three brothers, Wilfred, Raymond, and Joe Lucero, all of Palm City.